

BUILD SKILLS

Letters of Margaret Paston • Four Ballads

LITERARY ANALYSIS

A **letter** addresses a specific person or group. It is meant to be read within a specific time. The best letters preserve a moment in life. As you read Margaret Paston's letters, think about what they tell you about medieval times.

A **folk ballad** is a narrative poem. It is meant to be sung, and the author is unknown. Some ballads are humorous. Others are more serious, telling about lost loves and lives. Most ballads have these features:

- Four-line stanzas in which the second and fourth lines rhyme
- Repeated phrases or a regularly repeated section, called a refrain
- Dialogue.

Letters and ballads can serve as **primary sources**. These are documents from the past that report events or values of the time. Primary sources include letters, inscriptions, legal documents, and songs. Compare the information these selections offer about medieval life.

As you read these ballads, think about the views of medieval life they express.

READING STRATEGY

A **dialect** is a form of language. It is the form spoken by people in a certain area or group. In these ballads, you will read words in the Scottish-English dialect. To better understand them, you can

- read the unfamiliar words out loud. The sound of the words may help you recognize a word you know.
- read the footnotes on the page. They provide extra help.

Use the chart to help you figure out dialect.

Phrase in Dialect	They made a paction tween them twa.		
Meaning Suggested	Sound: twa = two tween = between		
Meaning Given in Footnote	paction = agreement		